# MAIL ONLINE

# High doses of statins could increase risk of diabetes

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**UPDATED:** 08:31, 22 June 2011

High doses of cholesterol-lowering pills can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, researchers warn.

They have found that patients taking intensive courses of statins were 12 per cent more likely to get the disease.

But experts pointed out that that the risk was far outweighed by the substantial benefits – the pills were shown to reduce the likelihood of heart attacks by 16 per cent.

More than seven million people in Britain now take statins - as many as one in three adults over the age of 40.

It is not known exactly how many are on high doses of more than 80 miligrams a day, but it is likely to only be a small proportion most at risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Researchers from the University of Glasgow looked at five previous studies involving 32,700 patients.

They were either on high doses of 80 mg or moderate doses of 20mg to 40 mg.

The study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found there were 149 extra cases of type 2 diabetes recorded amongst the patients on high dose statins, representing a 12 per cent risk.

The authors concluded: 'Our findings suggest that clinicians should be vigilant for the development of diabetes in patients receiving intensive statin therapy.'

Statins are extremely effective in lowering levels of cholesterol, the fatty substance in the blood that clogs up arteries leading to heart attacks and strokes.

Last night experts urged people not to stop taking the pills on the basis on this evidence.

Professor Peter Weissberg, medical director of the British Heart Foundation, said: 'Nobody should stop taking their prescribed statins because of the evidence shown in this research.

'Statins play a vital role in protecting the hearts of many, many people and the benefits still far outweigh any risks associated with diabetes.

'The increased risk occurred predominantly in those taking a high dose of these drugs, whereas most people are on low or moderate doses.

'Always speak to your doctor if you have any concerns about your medication. Don’t simply stop taking it.'

Experts also pointed out that patients on statins may have been at higher risk of diabetes in the first place if they were overweight.

Libby Dowling, clinical advisor at Diabetes UK said: 'This analysis of previous studies has found that high doses of statins increase the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, yet at the same time reduce the risk of heart disease.

'What we don’t know from this research is whether the people being prescribed the high-dose statins were overweight as having a large waist puts you at increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes anyway.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2006604/Diabetes-High-doses-statins-increase-risk.html#ixzz25bSXnU00>

The Express

June 22, 2011 Wednesday   
Edition 1;   
Northern Ireland

Cheaper statins on NHS can put patients in danger  
  
**BYLINE:** Jo Willey  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 6  
  
**LENGTH:** 500 words

MILLIONS of NHS patients are being prescribed a cut-price cholesterol-busting statin less effective than more expensive treatments.

Research reveals a pricier version slashes the risk of a heart attack or stroke by 19 per cent more than the statin recommended by the drug rationing body.

British researchers from St George's, University of London, and colleagues at the University of Glasgow, found that simvastatin recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence does not protect against coronary events as effectively as the alternative drug atorvastatin among patients taking high doses.

Simvastatin has also been shown to dramatically increase the risk of severe muscle damage.

The study also revealed that intensive doses of widely-prescribed statins increase the risk of Type 2 **diabetes** by 12 per cent.

But this was balanced by the high-dose patients also seeing a 16 per cent reduced risk of cardiovascular events.

The **diabetes** risk posed to overall health is low, especially when compared to the benefi-cial effects statins have on reducing the risk of serious heart problems.

More than six million in Britain take statins, usually a 40mg dose, to reduce their "bad" cholesterol and slash chances of a heart attack.

Left unchecked, the cholesterol can build up fatty deposits in the arteries and lead to coronary heart disease, heart attacks and stroke.

There has been evidence of severe side-effects from higher doses of 80mg, ranging from muscle aches and stomach upsets to a rare but serious lung disorder, cataracts, liver damage and kidney failure.

The research calls on Nice to recommend the more expensive pill instead. A 28-day course of simvastatin given to patients on 80mg costs around £2.30 compared with a 28-day course of atorvastatin which costs about £28.

Researcher Professor Kausik Ray from St George's said: "Statins are related to an increase in **diabetes** risk. Patients on high doses should continue and complement it with more regular screening for **diabetes**.

"Nice recommends simvastatin 80mg as it is the least expensive option in patients with established heart disease. However, this research shows that it is not the best option.

"There are people who are going to need high-dose **statin** **therapy.** Is £22 cheaper a price worth paying for a drug less effective at cholesterol lowering, has the same **diabetes** risk and has a 2000 per cent increase risk of severe muscle damage? It doesn't make sense."

WHAT THE DRUG DOES

? STATINS are drugs commonly used to reduce cholesterol levels in the blood.

? They include atorvastatin, fluvastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin and cheapest type, simvastatin.

? Statins are already taken by around six million people in Britain.

? They work by blocking the action of the chemical in the liver needed to make cholesterol.

? They can reduce harmful cholesterol by more than 20 per cent and the risk of dying from heart disease by around 25 per cent.

? The most recognised risks are muscle pains and weakness and damage to the liver.

# INDEPENDENT

# High dose of anti-cholesterol drugs linked to diabetes

[AFP](http://www.independent.co.uk/search/simple.do?destinationSectionUniqueName=search&publicationName=ind&pageLength=5&startDay=1&startMonth=1&startYear=2010&useSectionFilter=true&useHideArticle=true&searchString=byline_text:(%22AFP%22)&displaySearchString=AFP)

Thursday 23 June 2011

High doses of drugs aimed at lowering cholesterol are linked to increasing numbers of new diabetes cases in patients, said a review of multiple studies on the topic published Tuesday.

However, those same high doses helped dramatically lower the incidence of cardiovascular problems in patients, leaving doctors to balance the benefits and risks according to each individual patient.

The meta-analysis compared high and moderate doses of the anti-cholesterol drugs known as statins, in five randomized clinical trials on 32,752 people, and was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Over an average follow-up period of nearly five years, 8.4 percent of the patients developed diabetes - 1,449 in the intensive-dose category and 1,300 in the moderate dose group - a total of 149 more in the higher dose group.

But when the researchers examined how many patients had major cardiovascular problems after therapy, they found the higher dose statin group had 416 fewer such events (3,134 in the intensive group and 3,550 in the moderate one).

"Our findings suggest that clinicians should be vigilant for the development of diabetes in patients receiving intensive statin therapy," said the study, led by David Preiss of the University of Glasgow.

"Given the cardiovascular benefits of statins and the likely increasing use of intensive statin regimens, it is important to quantify any potential long-term risks to enable physicians and patients to make informed choices."

Statins - which include popularly known names such as Lipitor, Pravachol, and Crestor - are among the most widely prescribed drugs in the United States.

About 42 million Americans suffer from high cholesterol.

The drugs help reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke by lowering a person's low-density lipoprotein (LDL), sometimes known as "bad cholesterol."

Earlier this month, the US Food and Drug Administration issued a warning about high doses of the cholesterol-lowering medication simvastatin (Zocor, Vytorin, Simcor) because of an elevated risk of muscle injury associated with the 80 milligram dose, particularly in the first year of treatment.